

# Intoxication

Indulging in a few general remarks, it may be well to preface, that this, like some other vices is not one confined only to modern times. If the records of the past were more complete, we should in all probability find, that it was not unknown to the remotest ages of the world. From sacred history we have evidence that it occurred then, when society was but in its infancy - Indeed whenever the grape flourished, intoxication prevailed & wherever it has been prevalent, it is not impossible not to be struck, with the physical & moral degradation which it has spread over the world. Whenever intoxicating liquors became general, morality has been found on the decline - Acting like the hot simoom of the desert, they scatter destruction and misery in their pathway. The ruin of Rome was due more to the luxury of which indulgence in wine was the principal ingredient - Hannibal's army was overcome more by the wines of Leapsua than by the arms of Scipio. The inebriated hero of Macedonia after slaying his friend Clytus and burning the palace of Persopolis & buried at



last of ~~an~~ fit of intoxication - Much indeed. I  
might be written in illustration of the evil effects  
of dissipation, but this is unnecessary to those who  
carefully look around them and especially to those  
who are conversant with the history of mankind.  
While we speak of intebriation occurring in An-  
tiquity, it is proper to remark, that there were cer-  
tain countries in which it was viewed in a  
more dishonorable light, than by modern nations.  
Of these we cite but a few. The ancient Chivalrous  
& noble Spartans, who each would give their sons  
a shield, and <sup>bid</sup> them "Return with, or on this" held  
this vice in such abhorrence, that with a view  
to inspire the rising generation with due contempt  
of it, made it customary to intoxicate the slaves  
and exhibit them publicly in this degraded con-  
dition - A certain race is spoken of who refused  
to drink anything intoxicating, saying that it  
made them cowardly and effeminate, they did not  
feel the necessity of elevating their native valor  
by any artificial excitement - By the Indians  
it is looked upon as a species of insanity and in

their language - the word meaning drunkard <sup>3</sup>

also signifies madman. Both the ancients as well as the moderns could jest and moralize upon the subject. "There hangs a bottle of wine" was the derisive exclamation of the Roman soldier as they pointed to the body of the drunken Bonus who in a fit of the horrors suspended himself upon a tree. The facetious Matthew Langsberg remarked - "If you wish to have a shoe of durable materials you should make the upper leather of the mouth of a hard drinker for that never lets in water"

If we turn from antiquity to our own time, we shall find little cause to congratulate ourselves upon any improvement. It has made fearful strides among all classes - yet it is to be hoped the day is not far distant when greater temperance, prudence and moderation, will extend to every district even to every fire side. Having dwelt thus much upon preliminaries, I proceed at once to the subject in question, with the prefatory remark that the truly scientific Physician does not rest satisfied with the bare fact, that certain medicines have certain



44

effects upon the organism - nor is he content with the knowledge that liquors produce intoxication but he assiduously pushes his investigations farther with an anxiety to learn by what peculiar action of the system these Agents, give rise to such extraordinary effects. All intoxicating liquors operate partly by stimulating the organism, causing the heart to beat more violently, the blood to circulate more freely while at the same time they exert a peculiar action upon the nervous system, the nature of which action will probably now be satisfactorily explained.

If mere stimulation were all that was wanted then intoxication should be present in many cases where it is never met with - Its symptoms ought then to exist in inflammatory fevers, and after violent exercise. Intoxicating Agents therefore with few exceptions have a twofold action - They both act by increasing the circulation, and by influencing the nerves, the latter operation being no doubt the more important of the two - Having thus stated the general



5

fact, it will be better to consider the cause of each individual symptom in detail - The first coming under observation is, Giddiness - This is supposed to be produced by the ocular delusions, under which the individual labors, but it is chiefly owing to other causes as it is actually greater when the eyes are shut than when open. These causes by the exclusion of light being unaccountably increased, Vertigo from intoxication is far less liable to produce sickness and vomiting than from any other cause and when it does produce them it is to a very inconsiderable degree

These symptoms in nearly all cases arise from the disordered state of the stomach and not from the accompanying Giddiness - There are a certain class of persons who vomit and become pale as soon as Vertigo comes over them, but such are few in number compared with those, whose stomachs are unaffected by this sensation

In smoking, sailing at sea, on turning rapidly round, sickness and vomiting are apt to occur and proceed without a doubt from the Vertigo brought on by these actions



The vertigo of intoxication as it very rarely sickens  
must be presumed to have some characters peculiar  
to itself. In this as well as in some other affections  
it seems to be the consequence of a close sympathy  
between the brain and the nerve of the stomach and  
whatever affects the latter organ or any other viscus  
sympathizing with it. may bring it on equally with  
intoxicating agents. - In intoxication. giddiness  
is more strongly marked, because the powers both  
of body and mind are for the time impaired and  
the whole organism so disordered as to be unable to  
regulate the Conduct. This condition may be pro-  
duced by loading the stomach too rapidly and copiously  
after a long fast - Ordinary food in such a case  
amounts to a strong stimulus in consequence of the  
state of the stomach in which there was an unnatural  
want of excitement. This organ was in an inactive  
state and a stimulus which under ordinary cir-  
-cumstances would hardly have been felt proves in  
in reality, highly exciting



7

For the same reason objects have an unnatural brightness when a person is suddenly brought from intense darkness to a brilliant light-

The next symptom to be considered is that of Double vision: This which occurs in intoxication may be readily accounted for by the influence increased circulation in the brain upon the nerves of sight - This same phenomenon may, and indeed does occur in a state of frenzy & in fever. In conjunction with every nerve there is a vessel and it is conceivable that any unusual impulse of blood into the optics may so far affect this pair as to derange their actions

They therefore convey false impressions to the brain which is so much thrown off its balance that it cannot remedy the distorted images of the retina, even if that under any circumstances were possible. The refraction of light in the tears which are secreted more



copiously than usual during intoxication may also exert some influence in multiplying objects to the eye - We next have stuttering and unsteady walking - These manifestations are in like manner to be explained from the disordered state of the brain and nervous system - When the organ of sensation is affected it is impossible that parts whose actions depend upon it can perform their functions well - The nervous fluid is probably carried to the muscles in a broken and irregular current and the filaments ~~that~~ are scattered over the body are themselves directly paralyzed. then as a consequence insensibility to pain and other external impressions This insensibility extends everywhere, even to the organs of deglutition and speech. The utterance is thick and indistinct, indicating a loss of Power in the lingual nerves which give action to the tongue, and the same want of energy seems to prevail in the gustatory branches which give it taste



Heat and Flushing, being observed, ~~and~~ very marked results as we may readily see from the unusually strong determination of blood to the surface of the body - This reddens and causes a tumefaction of the face and eyes, and produces a universal glow of heat. The ringing in the ears which is another consequence has been accounted for by the generally <sup>increased</sup> action within the head more particularly however by the throbbing of the internal Carotid arteries which run in the immediate neighborhood of the ears.

In enumerating the pathological effects produced by intoxicating liquors I cannot refrain from introducing to notice one very important one so interesting in many respects, that to pass it by would be an injustice to the subject, it is, elevation of spirits, that sudden yet grand imaginary march, to wealth, to preferment in short that happy transmigration of the individual to the sublime beauties of Mahomet's seventh heaven

The mental pleasure of intoxication is not easily explained on even Physiological principles. We feel a delight in being rocked gently in swinging lightly or in being tickled. These act undoubtedly upon the nerves but in what manner it would be idle to attempt investigating. Intoxicating agents no doubt do the same thing - The mental manifestations produced by their influence depend almost entirely upon the nerves and are in a great measure independent of vascular excitement.

The power of exciting the feelings inherent in these principles can only be accounted for by supposing a more intimate relation to exist between the body and the mind - The brain through the medium of its nervous branches is the source of all this excitement - These branches receive the impressions and convey them to their fountain head whence they are showered like sparkling rain drops over the mind in a thousand fantastic varieties.



No bodily affection ever influences the mind but through proximate agency of the brain. It sits enthroned in the citadel thought and though material itself. acts with wonderful power over both matter and spirit - no other texture has the same pervading principle - If the lungs be diseased we have expectoration + cough. if the liver Jaundice or dropsy. if the stomach, indigestion, but when the brain is affected we have not merely many bodily symptoms, but severe affections of the mind, nor are such affections ever produced by any organ but through the agency of the brain - It therefore acts in double capacity upon the frame being both the source of bodily ailments and mental manifestations - Admitting this truth, there can be little difficulty in apprehending why intoxication produces so powerful a mental influence. This must proceed from a resistless impulse given to the brain by reason of the peculiar action of intoxicating agents upon the nerve.

That organ of the mind is suddenly endowed with increased energy and not only does the blood circulate through it more rapidly but an action as it were sui generis is given to its whole substance. Mere increase of circulation as we have already stated is not sufficient, there must be some other principle whatever it may be at work upon its texture and it is this principle that serves as the main cause of intoxication. At first intoxication has a soothing effect and falls over the spirit like the hum of bees or the wooing appearance of a ~~mountain~~ <sup>Cascade</sup> in the distance, then to these soft dreams of Elysium succeed a state of maddening energy and excitement in the brain. The thoughts which emanate from its prolific tabernacle are more ferid and original than ever, they rush out in greater abundance and sparkle with greater brilliancy. In a word the organ is excited to a high but not a diseased action for this is coupled with pain.



These then are some of the conditions produced by means of intoxicating Agents  
Others such as -mania e Potu. Dementia  
- and a certain peculiar state of the  
liver incident to a protracted use of  
these agents might have been mentioned  
and discussed but denning the minor,  
the more important ones, indeed those  
which <sup>come</sup> under more frequent observation  
as those which are more frequently  
inquired into I have seen fit to consider  
them only. and beg leave very respectfully  
to present them for the inspection  
and consideration of the Faculty of  
of the Hahnemann Medical College.